

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

*Rose Betit*

### **The Coldest Winter**

**M**amie Brosnan Elementary called off school today 'cause the boiler broke down and they can't heat the classrooms now. It's a good thing it's called off, since our school clothes didn't quite get dry, even if they **were** hung by the space heater all night on wire hangers. We wrung 'em out over the kitchen sink as hard as we could by wrapping 'em around the faucet and twisting and twisting until we couldn't turn 'em no more. My big brother says it's 'cause it's too cold out.

"The heater ain't got enough output to heat the rooms and dry the clothes at the same time," he says.

"Well, it don't much heat the house neither." Mama says back and wags her head like she does when something is a cryin' shame.

She says it's colder outside than a witch's tit in a brass bra. I don't know nothing about no witches tits and I didn't even know there was any such thing as a brass bra (and wouldn't that be an uncomfortable thing to wear in any weather?), but I do know it's cold enough to drape icicles over the branches of the pink mimosa in the backyard - which, by the way, is more worrisome to Mama than how cold a witch's tit gets.

I always ask too many questions and I ask her about the brass bra and she says, "That don't matter. Look at my mimosa! If the cold breaks my mimosa, we're all doomed!"

I want to know what a mimosa branch breaking has to do with dooming us all. But that's just not something you ask when you're 8 and you're sitting by the window with your already-in-a-fret mama watching winter fixing to kill everyone and everything with the cold, when just now, right before our eyes, the strongest, thickest branch on the tree done snapped off and fell to the ground with a pop and a thud.